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To My Dear Friend, Mrs. Foxon,
With Love and Best Wishes,
Minnie B. Conshille

LONDON

Christmas Trinity - 1897

AS SEEN BY

CHARLES DANA GIBSON

NEW YORK

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

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LONDON STREETS



The Rat Man



AFTER a short journey through country divided by hedges into a green and gold checker-board ; thatched roofs disappear, and chimney-pots take their place and flourish until you come to the Thames, where black barges in mid-stream wait for the muddy tide to turn, between banks of masts and smokestacks ; then the Gothic buildings of Parliament, and "Big Ben," and Charing Cross Station ; and in another moment you are in London, riding through the never-ending restlessness of its streets in a cab that you can afford, with your hat-box safe by your side and your trunk up by the driver, and London with its history on all sides of you, its wooden streets and polished side-walks and bright shop windows, and at every corner small sweeps and big policemen, providing clean and safe crossing, while push-carts dodge in and out between steaming bus-horses and hansom cabs. This is always my first impression of London.



Outside Morley's



As all Americans arrive in London with sea-legs after a week of ship's cooking, it is doubly necessary to have been there before in order to know where to go at once for an on-shore dinner and good rooms. But before you arrive at either of these you once more become a part of the city and again feel perfectly at home, as you look from your cab window at theatrical lithographs to find out what is going on for that night; and no transformation scene on the stage is more complete than your own, from standing in the companion-way waiting for the ship's run to be posted, to a few hours later sitting in a London theatre watching the stage rock from side to side.

I believe an American enjoys London more during his second visit. He is sure to be older for one thing, and with very little left of the prejudice he once had. He is not so apt to wear a sensitive patriotic chip on his shoulder, and for this reason he will give London a better opportunity to know him. If it is your second visit you have the pleasure of recognizing familiar types and places. Your hotel porter may remember you, and there may be one or two of the old waiters still left in the dining-room. Nelson's Column and the National Gallery are former friends; also the recruiting sergeants, among them Sergeant Charley, the best known of all. He has stood at the corner of the National Gallery for many years, and has probably talked more country boys into Her Majesty's service, consoled more weeping mothers, and cheered more disappointed maidens than any other man in the British army. There is no better place in which Sergeant Charley can operate than Trafalgar Square—or from which the stranger can begin London.

Between Times, Leicester Square



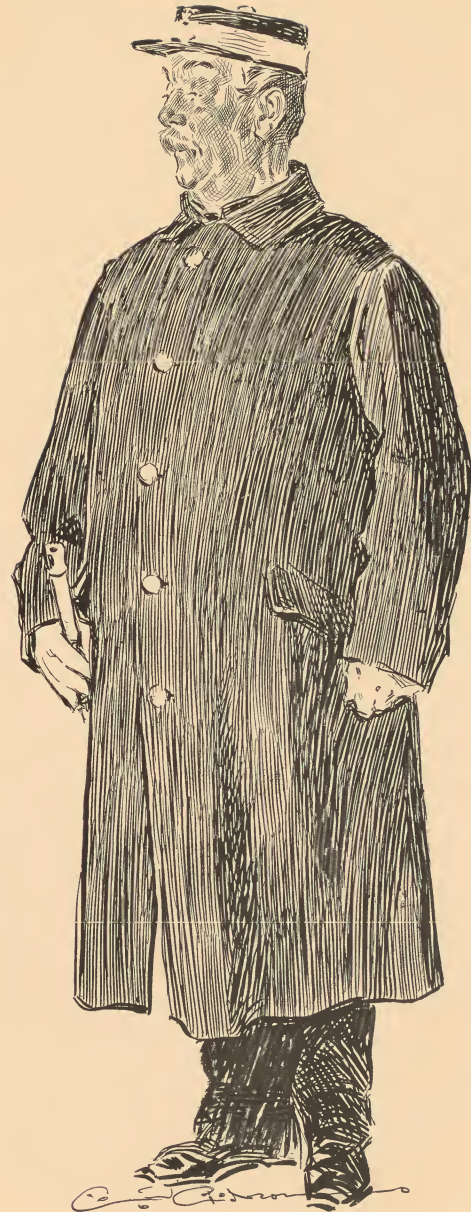
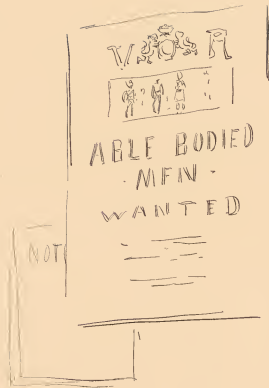
On Bond Street



The bewildering scene always reminds me of the art student I once saw painting it from the steps of the gallery; and I thought then that if the actors on the great stage in front of her could have seen the hopeless condition of her canvas and her pale, worried face they might have stood still for awhile. But the panorama has never stopped, and the only quiet figures in Trafalgar Square are its bronze statues. There you will see country boys looking, with admiring envy, at the smart uniforms of the soldiers, and with terror at the dingy army of sandwich-men shuffling through the gutter carrying advertisements of hot and cold luncheons, Turkish baths, manicure parlors, and places of amusement, serving, at the same time, as awful examples of what will happen to all those who do not take the sergeant's advice and become soldiers. Even some of the street beggars are familiar. "The old rat-man" and his pets find Brighton too dull in the winter, and come up to London for the season, to mix once more in its streets, where all kinds of horses are driven by as great a variety of men, from the pedler to the powdered-wigged coachman. Cable-cars and trolleys would be sadly out of place in London, and horseless carriages would be a calamity. There should be no need to go faster than a horse can trot, and the best way of all is to walk.



Carl Gibson



Sergeant Charley



You can stand on a bridge while scows drift slowly under you, and St. Paul's sinks into the smoke and darkness, like the dissolving views at a lecture on travel. It is quite proper that the underground railway should be used mostly for advertising purposes; but the most gaudy posters fail to brighten up those dingy tunnels, and no amount of speed can compensate for the time you are away from the world over your head. London is not a place to go under.

There is no reason to be lonely. No one ever knows London, and before you have been there long you are showing Londoners about their own city with the pride of a part owner in its history; for, to an American, the old part of the city is his—as much so as the portraits of his ancestors. The pictures may not be on his walls, but he stands as good a chance of being like their originals as the man who owns the house in which they hang.



Hyde Park Corner



LONDON AUDIENCES

NOWHERE is caste more noticeable than in a London audience. A little board fence divides the ground-floor of a theatre into orchestra stalls and a pit. It would cost you ten shillings less and your social position to sit on the wrong side of this fence. It does not follow that sitting on the right side of it assures your position. But it does give you an uninterrupted view of the stage. No hats are worn, and that alone makes it worth extra charge. There is, in most of the theatres, room for your knees, and in some, additional room for the man who goes out between the acts, and people who arrive after the curtain is up. A London audience is brilliant. Everyone is in evening dress, and the audience is often more entertaining than the play. This is especially true on a first night. At such times the pit is watched most anxiously by the management, as the success of the piece generally depends on their verdict. It has often occurred to me, when I have seen them on a stormy night forming a line on the pavement outside the pit entrance, taking it all seriously enough to stand there for hours before the doors were opened, that by letting them inside the management might improve their spirits, and they in their turn might be more gentle.



Outside the Pit Entrance

And it has also occurred to me that the management might further improve the spirits of their audience by doing away with women ushers, and by selling the programme at the same time they sell the seat ; for it is hardly fair to the first act of a play to make it overcome the fretfulness caused by annoying attendants before it can hope to amuse. But the second act is sure to have a fair start, and if the play is good from there on, it will have no reason to complain of the audience.

An Englishman's memory begins with a pantomime. A Drury Lane audience easily explains this, as a large portion of it is composed of children. This is just as it should be. The only mistake is that each year the clown and pantaloon have less to do. Last winter they only appeared in front of the drop curtain, and had difficulty in entertaining the audience until the next scene had been set. It is strange that this should happen among people who are naturally so true to old friends. In the place of harlequin's tricks they have the aërial ballets and electrical effects, and altogether a performance that can be done just as well at the Empire or the Alhambra. This is dangerous, for it might in time change the character of a pantomime audience.



A First Night



Small Wigs and Big Fees



In the Lord Chief Justice's Court



A fancy dress-ball in London is slow. The general orders are, "keep moving along." The man who manages the search-light, from one of the top boxes, probably enjoys the ball the most. He certainly does more to help it. The centre of interest is wherever he will have it. He can make a dull costume bright, and a supper-party in one of the boxes proud; and he can almost remove the gloom caused by the officials in black.

The greatest variety of expressions are to be seen in the audiences that come together at the law courts. There is the never-changing face of the judge, and the ever-changing face of the witness rocking from side to side in his box, and there are the black-robed barristers with small wigs and big fees, and pale law students crowding in at the doors and filling the passage-ways; and in front of the long table that is covered with papers and high hats sit those most interested in what is going on—care-worn parents and women thickly veiled.



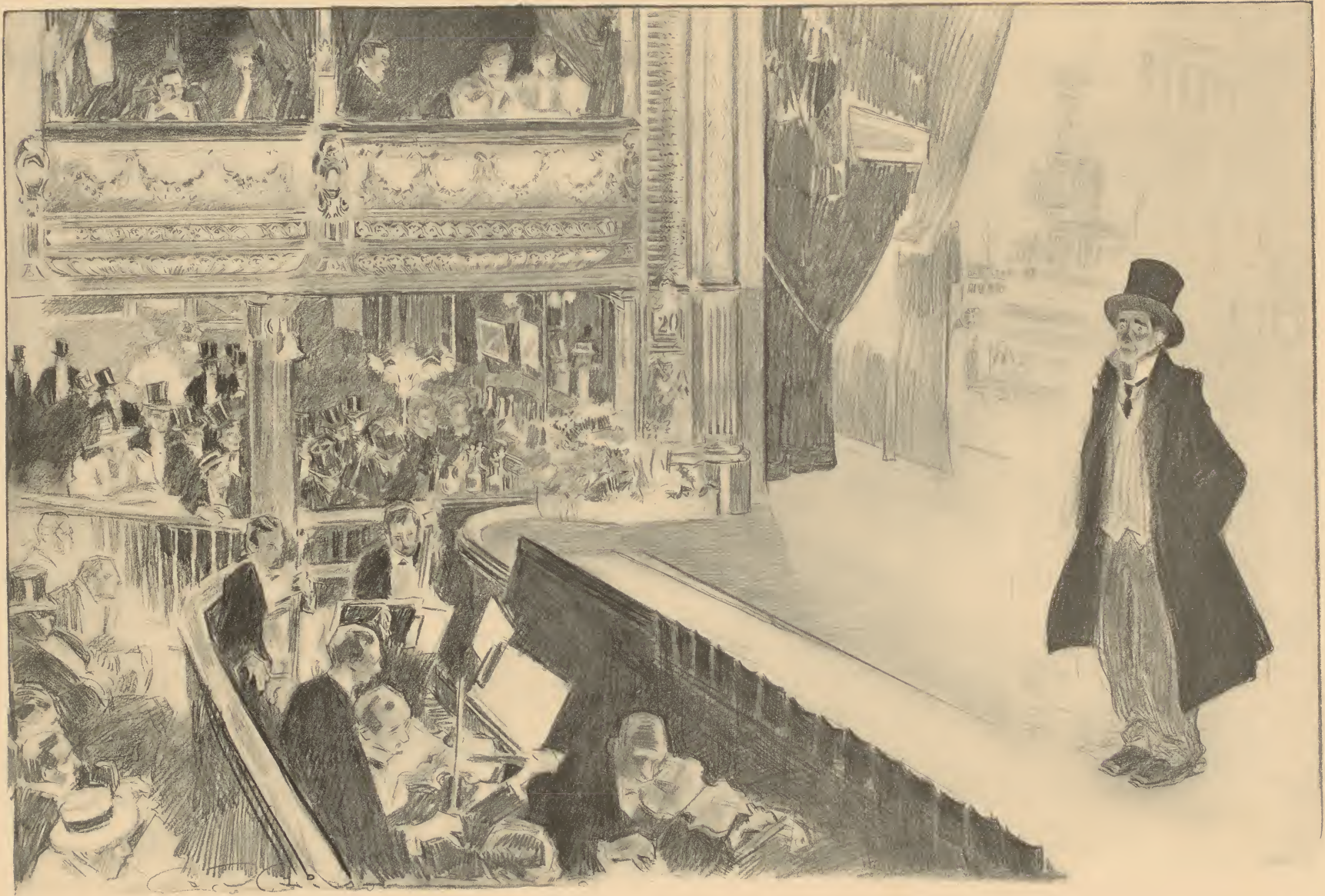
In the "Whispering Gallery"—A Small Loan

The most interesting place of amusement for men is the National Sporting Club. Every Monday night during the winter the sports of London meet there in the same building that Colonel Newcome and his son once left because they objected to Captain Costigan's song. The Colonel would be more amused there now, well-trained and scientific boxers from all the world meet in a roped-in square, surrounded by an orderly crowd of stock-brokers, bankers, and miscellaneous sporting characters, who wait for the best man to win. Then they adjourn to a front room, and around the bar and little tables they talk about by-gone fights and the men and horses whose pictures cover the wall. Some find their way to the Strand, where, in a supper-room called Marble Halls, every variety of sport in all stages of luck, and actors from the neighboring theatres, discuss the fight of the evening round by round.



At the National Sporting Club

A Music Hall audience is the most demonstrative and amusing. It will applaud the longest, hiss the loudest, and sometimes join in the chorus. From the moment the numbers are posted announcing the next turn, it is easy to tell what the performer's reception will be. On both sides of the orchestra are bars, and when a London barmaid stops work to listen and laugh you may be sure that the turn is a good one. Last winter they paid Dan Leno this compliment. The air is filled with tobacco-smoke, and the calcium-light, on its way from the gallery to the stage, looks like a sunbeam in a dusty hayloft.



At the Pavilion

LONDON PARKS



A Sidewalk Artist

THE first and most natural question asked of any city is "Show us your people." In answer to this, London may safely begin by pointing to its parks, and especially so on any Sunday during the season, for on that day you can best see how caste has assorted and parcelled the city off into so many exhibits, as carefully arranged as the specimens in the British Museum.

The walks in Hyde Park have their special social value, as much so as the walks in life; and in the park or in life, whichever path an Englishman uses, it is safe to suppose that his ancestors walked there before him. The parks of London are handy. From a Piccadilly club window can be seen sheep enough to fill a barn-yard, and a stone's throw from the Horse Guards is St. James's Park with its duck island, where all kinds of rare birds flock together; and their relatives in far-away countries are no better fed than these happy exiles in the heart of the great city, and the peacocks that ornament the banks of the Serpentine are as happy as the boys who sail the toy-boats on that toy river.



Sunday Morning near Stanhope Gate



HAMLET

Sunday is Hyde Park's day "At Home," and in the shape of a blue sky she sends her invitation to all London, and her popularity is easily shown by the number and variety of her friends. By long odds the best-looking exhibit is to be seen during church-parade. It extends from Hyde Park Corner to Stanhope Gate, and consists of the well-to-do, most of whom probably first came to the park with their nurses and a little later with their tutors, and they now come grown up and with white hair to pay their respects to the good doctor of their childhood. They form what is distinctly a Sunday gathering, and one as serious as a wedding. Seldom a loud voice is heard. There is a feeling of rest throughout the whole scene, and it is impossible to be there without entering into the spirit of it. In the solemn throng that pass and repass I have seen a noisy steamer acquaintance thoroughly subdued and looking like an undertaker in a long coat and high hat. Everyone else seemed to have been there from childhood. The old gentleman in the Row undoubtedly first appeared there on Shetland ponies under the watchful eye of the groom. It is not a thing to tire of, and Sunday after Sunday these well-dressed people attend church-parade as seriously as they attend church. A little farther into the park are the shopkeepers and domestics listening to the band. Here you are likely to meet the real estate agent and tailor with whom you have already had dealings. They are a distinct class, and very different from the first exhibit. They keep their frock-coats carefully buttoned, and are apparently not so much at their ease.



A Constitutional in the Park



In the Row



A Park Orator

Separated from these people by another social gulf, and toward Marble Arch, are the unemployed listening to the park actors and park orators. If you are tall enough to look over the heads of an English crowd you will see in some of these groups strolling players at work. In the centre of one group a short, red-faced park orator declares that a Prime Minister has robbed him.

The farther away from these shady paths the sadder London is. Among them foreigners feel at home. Little home-sick law students from India may mope in Piccadilly, but in Hyde Park they look happy. Once there the British soldier is no longer war-like; he becomes helpless and happy, surrounded by nature and under the influence of some pink-cheeked domestic.

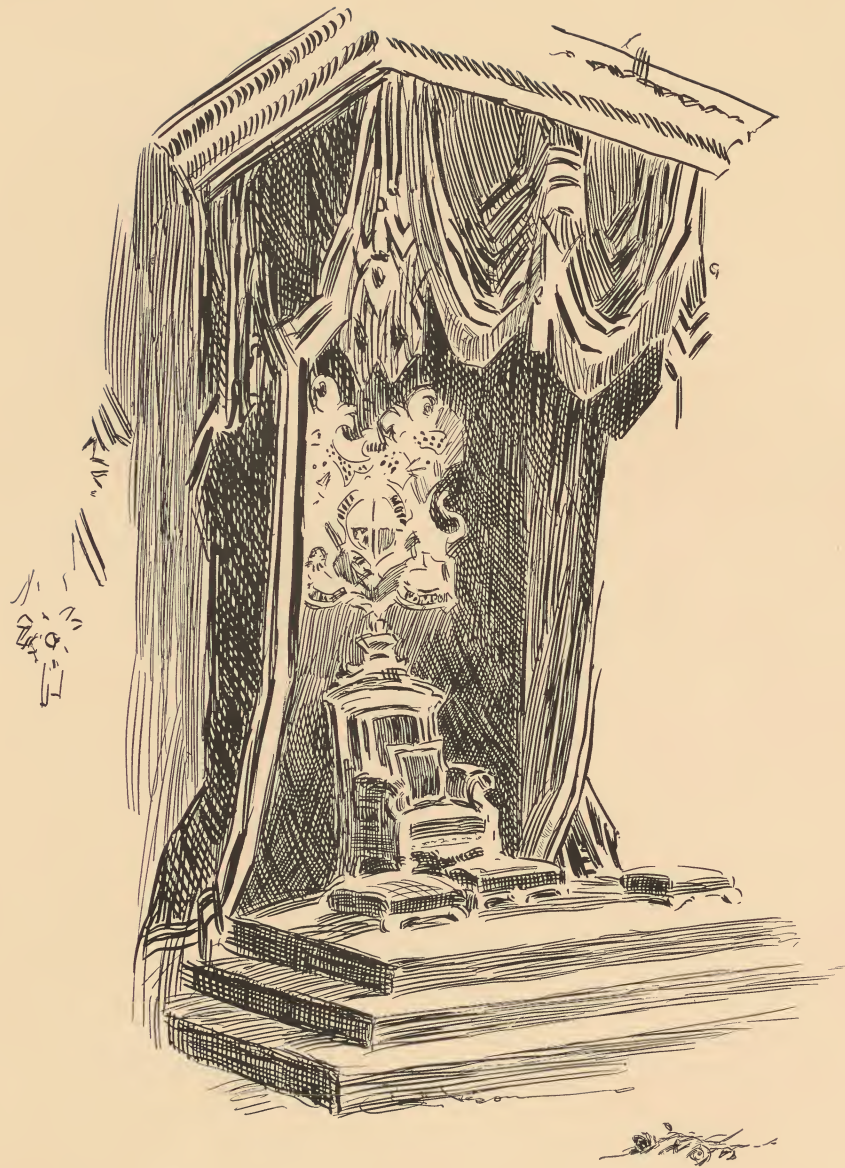
In the early part of the day the parks are occupied by very young people; the visitors become older with the day. The nurses and their charges leave, and evening finds an old lady leaning on her husband's arm, walking slowly along their favorite path, while their carriage follows at a little distance. And as night comes on they roll back into the great city among the never-ceasing tread of feet, past the side-walk artist sitting by his pictures on the pavement, looking anxiously at the passers-by—and the park's day is done—a curtain of darkness falls on the great stage; the peacocks go to roost in its trees; the ducks are undisturbed by wet dogs, and the Serpentine's small fish are no longer in danger of bent pins; and the park, London's kind friend and good physician, is resting.



Church Parade



After Hours



A DRAWING-ROOM

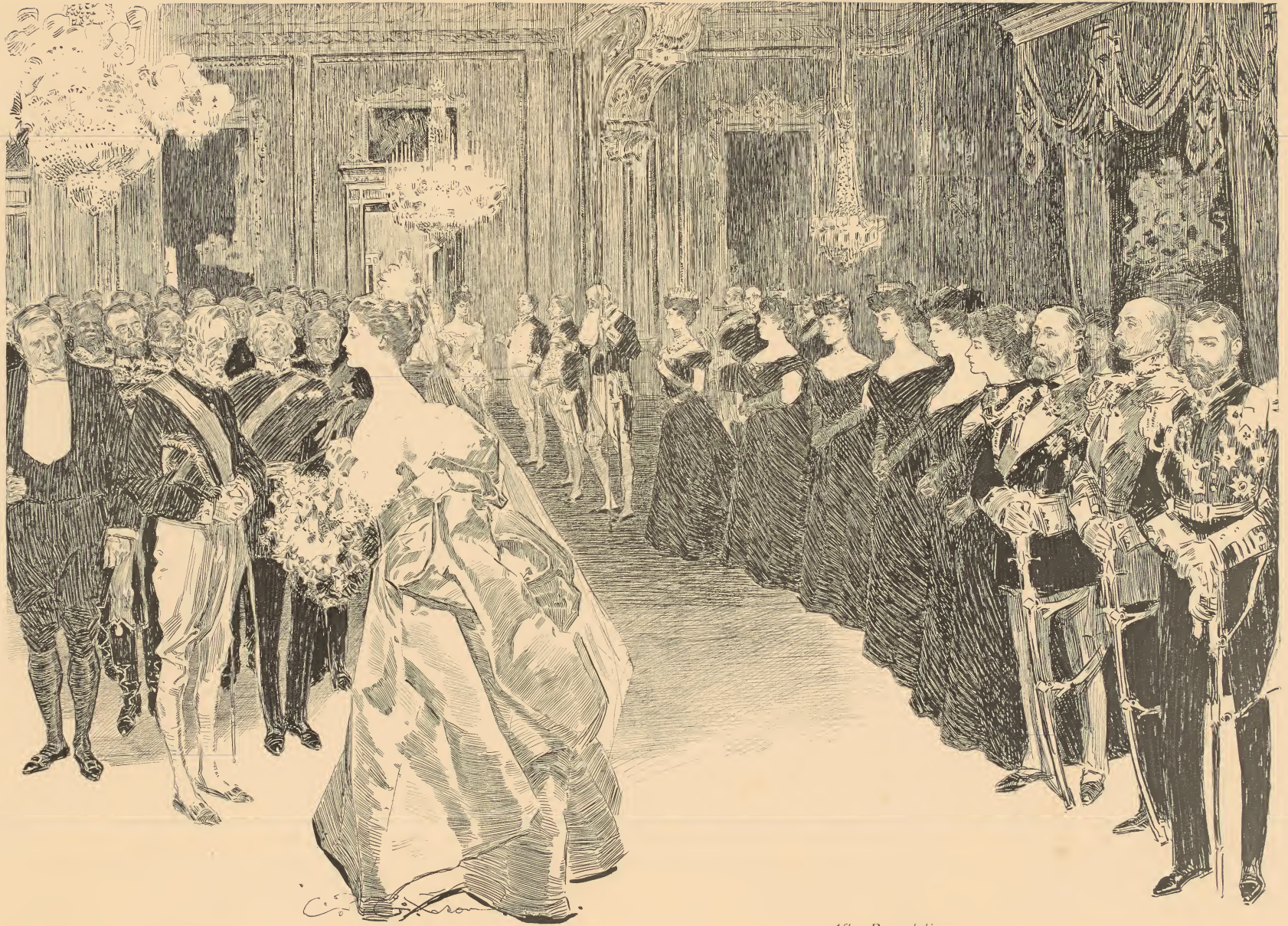
ON March 11, 1896, the first Drawing-room of that year was held at Buckingham Palace. Through the courtesy of the Lord Chamberlain I was given the entrée to the palace on that day. As a Drawing-room is strictly a feminine affair, it matters very little what a man may think about it, for the fine points of social advantages and the costly costumes he seldom understands. Apart from the foreign ambassadors, members of the Cabinet and attendants, men are not wanted and are seldom seen. Women go in hundreds, and sit for hours in carriages, extending in long rows down the Mall, while a crowd of curious idlers stare in at the carriage windows, making audible personal remarks. At two o'clock the palace gates are open, and the waiting continues in the different rooms above stairs.



Waiting



A Barrier



After Presentation

These rooms are divided by barriers, guarded by gentlemen of the household, which prevents over-crowding. It is an extraordinary sight to see room after room filled with nervous young girls and their more composed mothers sitting in the unbecoming light of an afternoon sun, with white plumes in their hair and the family jewels on their necks. With the exception of a now and then whispered conversation, everything is quiet until the barriers leading into the next room are opened; then a rush follows and small pieces of lace, spangles, flowers, and ostrich feathers are left on the floor. Mothers and daughters are separated. After the confusion of finding each other, all is quiet for another thirty minutes, when a rush for a better place in the next room begins. A retired Colonel, the guardian of a barrier, noticing my interest and my evening dress, asked me if I did not think it looked like an ostrich farm. He pointed out his wife to me, and said a French hairdresser had been at his house all that morning. The Colonel's pretty wife looked it. From there I crossed the ambassadors' room and the picture-gallery, where the people who have the entrée wait, and entered the throne-room. At that time there were three men in it; two of them, gentlemen of the household, were standing on either side of the door. One of them told me that the young officer with a bearskin hat on his arm, standing by a long window overlooking the central court, was there to signal to the band outside when the royal family entered, in order that they might know when to play "God Save the Queen." He also motioned with his head toward a small door in one corner of the big red room, and said through it the royal party would enter. I asked the same gentleman why Drawing-rooms were not held in the evening. He said he did not know. At this time the Prime-Minister, in a dark uniform with a blue ribbon across his breast, entered the room, followed by Court dignitaries, gentlemen ushers, and the Lord Chamberlain with his staff of office. Then the little door opened, and while the band played "God Save the Queen," the Princess of Wales and the royal party filed in. Then there was a low bow on both sides; the Lord Chamberlain took his position by the Princess of Wales, and read from the cards handed him by the ushers the names of those who were being presented.



After the ambassadors and their wives came those having the entrée; after them those without. The white procession had started, and the Drawing-room that had been rehearsed and looked forward to for years, as far as each individual's part in it was concerned, was soon over. At the end of two hours there was another low bow, and the royal family filed back through the little door. The bustle and waiting was transferred to the grand hall below, where little olive-skinned Indian ladies of high birth, and famous English beauties whose photographs could be bought on Piccadilly, stood side by side until their carriages stopped the way. Mothers and daughters passed between rows of Yeomen of the Guard to the door, daylight, and the photographers; finally home, where tea is arranged, and friends are gathered to hear about it.

I had a second opportunity to see a Drawing-room, and I am of the impression that they must be very much alike.



A Gentleman at Arms



A Drawing-room Tea



LONDON SALONS

An Early Departure

THE "season" begins about the time Parliament opens, and Parliament's opening and closing depends more or less on fox-hunting and grouse-shooting. As the "season" approaches, town-houses are opened and "green" servants are broken in; secretaries busy themselves with lists and stationery, and the winter campaign begins immediately upon the family's return to town. As a London house is seldom needed for more than the formal entertainments of a season, it is in most cases hired; consequently, it is seldom attractive. Acquaintances are entertained in the city, and friends are taken into the country to spend the week's end on the family estate, surrounded by the household gods and the most attractive side of all England. There the future members of the House of Lords, and the belles of some future Drawing-room, ride donkeys, and the older people ride wheels and sit under English oaks and make little water-color sketches, and it is easily seen why only social duties take them to London.



Distinguished Guests

By eight o'clock in the evening almost every other house that you see will have a little red carpet stretching from its door to the curb, and in some cases a temporary awning over it. The streets seem to be given over entirely to carriages and hansoms carrying people to dinner. When the last guest has arrived the carpet is taken in until later on, when it again rolls back down the steps and across the pavement, between two lines of footmen, while the butler whistles for hansoms, and half of fashionable London goes to its own house, its club, or its lodgings. A Member of Parliament, during a short recess, will leave the House and drive miles to a dinner. He may arrive thirty minutes late, or leave before the dinner is half over. A Quartermaster-General will leave the War Office an hour earlier, because he has promised to go bicycling with some young people, and an Editor will leave his paper and accompany his wife to a tea.



After Dinner





At Dinner

This interest in all things gives English people time for everything.

A London reception is bright and amusing. In the early part of the evening statesmen, diplomats, and older people are in the majority; at eleven o'clock those who have been to the play arrive, and a little later the actors themselves. From the staircase people can best be seen. It is always crowded by those who are on their way to pay respects to the hostess in the hall above, and by those who have already done so and are on their way down to the supper-room. Above and below a dense crowd elbow and talk around and through you. You are slowly twisted past your hostess and through the parlors, and then finally back to the staircase, down which you can go as slowly as you please. No one is in a hurry—so out into the early morning, between rows of uniformed coachmen standing like sentries sleeping on their post.



Your Hostess



LONDON PEOPLE

ONCE upon a time, judging by John Leech's pictures of English women (who could do almost everything in those days but manage their hoop-skirts), they were all short and became instantly stout when they arrived at forty. If Leech was right, English women must have changed very much since then. It may be that they grew tall to more closely resemble Du Maurier's goddesses. In many cases they have succeeded, as may be seen at Lord's or at any fashionable race-course. There may not be a variety of good looks, but one type is very beautiful. So strong is the family likeness, they might all be handsome sisters. There was something very sweet and lovable about that plump little woman of Mr. Leech's. I only met her in reality after she had grown into a sweet old lady, and I should have regretted not having seen her before had I not seen her tall granddaughters.



Patently Listening



The fact that Phil May is a prophet in his own country should alone clear Englishmen of the suspicion that they are slow to see fun. On an Englishman's love of fair play and good sport no suspicion has ever rested. It is the most attractive thing about him, and it is only natural that the greatest assortment of good-natured people are to be found at the Derby. I had already met them in May's drawings, and I was prepared to find the good-nature contagious. Last year a party on a coach opposite the Royal box and a policeman, who looked after that particular part of the course, drank champagne out of the same bottle. When the Prince of Wales came down to lead Persimmon off the track, short men stood on boxes and balanced themselves by holding on to whoever stood next to them. Gypsy fortune-tellers and painted-faced minstrels climbed on the backs of coaches. Everyone shouted together and probably wished that the Prince had been a little taller, so that they might all have seen him.



At the Savoy



Phil May



George du Maurier



English-speaking people have been introduced to each other by a long line of clever draughtsmen. They have laughed together about the same people in the truest and sweetest-natured way in all the world. Above all others, one hand awakened the interest resulting in people knowing themselves and others better. The beautiful was safe in that gentle hand. Although the heart that guided it no longer beats, the human interest and kindly feeling that it awakened will live forever, and all the world has placed among the foremost men of his day the affectionately remembered name of George Du Maurier.

These drawings were made among the most hospitable people I ever met. When I have failed, it has not been owing to a lack of interest, but more likely on account of a consciousness that my results would fall short of my desires. The disappointments following the completion of a drawing made from a beautiful woman are many. In these portraits I have the most to regret.



The Queen





An Englishman can tell at once in just what particular walk of life every other Englishman is ; consequently, at home every Englishman is made to know his place.

English people are never forgetful of services rendered. A public servant, long after his work has lost its value, may grow old in comfort and be spared the mortification of neglect. Londoners are charitable, and will patiently listen to a singer long after his fame has outlived his voice. A music-hall audience will shout itself hoarse over a song which mentions Tom Sayers or any favorite of days gone by.

LONDON

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